

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 COME-00 EB-07 INR-07 LAB-04

NSAE-00 SIL-01 DODE-00 PA-02 USIA-15 PRS-01 SP-02

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FM AMEMBASSY MANAMA BAHRAIN

TO SECSTATE WASHINGTON DC 2706

INFO AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI UAE

AMCONSUL DHAHRAN SAUDI ARABIA

AMEMBASSY DOHA QATAR

AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD PAKISTAN

AMEMBASSY JIDDA SAUDI ARABIA

AMEMBASSY KUWAIT KUWAIT

AMEMBASSY MUSCAT OMAN

AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI INDIA

AMEMBASSY TEHRAN IRAN

UNCLAS MANAMA 032

E.O. 11652 : N/A

TAGS : ELAB, BA

SUBJECT : BAHRAINI NATIONALS LOSE EDGE IN LOCAL LABOR FORCE

1. ACCORDING TO LABOR MINISTRY OFFICIALS, BAHRAIN IS EXPERIENCING A RECORD INFLUX OF FOREIGN LABOR TO WORK IN THE BURGEONING CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY AND OTHER SECTORS. IN 1975 ALONE, LABOR MINISTER TOLD US, AN ESTIMATED 20,000 ADDITIONAL FOREIGN WORKERS ENTERED THE LABOR FORCE (TOTAL THUS PROBABLY APPROACHES 100,000 PERSONS OF POPULATION NEARING 300,000). INFLOW HAS PRODUCED NOTABLE SHIFT IN LABOR FORCE COMPOSITION. AS LATE AS 1971, BAHRAINI NATIONALS CONSTITUTED ABOUT 63 PERCENT OF WORK FORCE; AT PRESENT, MINISTRY OFFICIALS CALCULATE, BAHRAINI SHARE IS DOWN TO AROUND 40 PERCENT. AS A RESULT, BAHRAIN'S EMPLOYMENT PICTURE IS NO LONGER THE EXCEPTION ALONG THE GULF. LIKE ALL ITS ARAB NEIGHBORS, IT HAS CLEAR MAJORITY OF FOREIGNERS IN ITS WORKING FORCE.

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2. MOST INCOMING WORKERS OF LATE HAVE BEEN SOUTH ASIANS, PRIMARILY PAKISTANIS AND INDIANS. SMALL BUT GROWING NUMBERS, HOWEVER, ARE BEING DRAWN BY EMPLOYERS FROM FARTHER AFIELD: KOREA, TAIWAN, THE PHILLIPPINES AND THAILAND. TO SOME EXTENT, AUTHORITIES SEEM TO BE ENCOURAGING SUCH DIVERSIFICATION. AS MINISTRY'S DIRECTOR OF LABOR REMARKED TO REGIONAL LABATT, OVER-RELIANCE ON SINGLE ASIAN COUNTRY WOULD NOT BE IN BAHRAIN'S INTEREST.

3. TO DATE, BAHRAINI AUTHORITIES APPEAR TO HAVE NO PLANS TO RESTRICT INFLUX. THEY ACCEPT FACT THAT ADDED MANPOWER IS REQUIRED FOR TIMELY COMPLETION OF ONGOING PROJECTS AND THEY PRESUMABLY EXPECT THAT, ONCE CONSTRUCTION PEAKS, FOREIGN MANPOWER WILL BEGIN TO CONTRACT. NONETHELESS, MINISTRY OFFICIALS ARE STARTING TO SHOW CONCERN OVER SEVERAL SIDE-EFFECTS OF HEIGHTENED PRESENCE OF FOREIGN WORKERS. THEY CITE, FOR EXAMPLE, STRAIN ON ALREADY TIGHT HOUSING, POTENTIAL HEALTH PROBLEM OF DISEASES BEING IMPORTED WITH WORKERS, AND IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE BAHRAINIZATION. OFFICIALS FORESEE NEED FOR EVENTUAL OFFICIAL MEASURE IN SUCH AREAS BUT AS YET THEY HAVE NOT DETERMINED WHAT TO DO.

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